



English for Tourism SMEs

Work Package 2: Needs Analysis, Competency Map and Target Task Framework

Final Report



Ljubomir Vasojević

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. WP2 Objectives and Expected Outputs	2
3. Methodological Approach	5
4. Summary of Needs Analysis Findings	10
5. Competency Map for Rural Tourism SMEs	13
6. Target Task Domains (Activity Groups)	18
7. Consolidated Target-task List	21
8. Training Needs and Learner Profile	24
9. Alignment with WP3 – Course and Resource Development	28
10. Conclusion	34

1. Introduction

Work Package 2 (WP2) of the *English for Tourism SMEs* project was designed to carry out a comprehensive Needs Analysis and to define a structured and validated set of target communication tasks that will serve as the pedagogical foundation for the development of the project's English language training programme.

The focus of WP2 was on rural tourism SMEs across four partner countries – Serbia, Spain, Romania, and Portugal – with particular attention to the real-life communication needs of owners, managers, and staff who interact with international visitors. Given the growing importance of international tourism and the increasing expectations of foreign guests, English communication has become a key operational and strategic competence for SMEs in this sector.

The central objective of WP2 was therefore not simply to assess general language proficiency, but to identify **specific communicative situations and tasks** that rural tourism professionals must be able to perform effectively in English. This approach aligns with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), where learning is structured around meaningful, real-world activities rather than abstract language knowledge.

The final output of WP2 is a coherent framework consisting of:

- a **Competency Map**,
- a set of **Target Task Domains (activity groups)**,
- and a **Consolidated Target Task List**,

all of which are directly grounded in empirical research and validated through multiple stages of analysis.

These outputs are intended to ensure that the next phase of the project (WP3 – Course and Resource Development) is fully aligned with the actual needs of the target group and capable of delivering practical, applicable learning outcomes.

2. WP2 Objectives and Expected Outputs

WP2 was guided by a set of clearly defined objectives, as outlined in the project framework, which emphasise both analytical and developmental outcomes.

At its core, WP2 aimed to:

- identify the **current communication practices** of rural tourism SMEs,
- analyse the **contexts and situations** in which English is used,
- determine the **frequency, importance, and difficulty** of communication tasks,
- and define a **structured set of target tasks** that can be used as the basis for training design.

In addition, WP2 sought to capture not only current needs but also **emerging trends and future demands**, particularly in relation to:

- digital communication,
- sustainability-related interaction,
- and experience-based tourism services.

The expected results of WP2 include several key outputs:

a) Needs Analysis Report

A comprehensive synthesis of data collected through:

- surveys,
 - expert interviews,
 - and focus group discussions,
- providing both quantitative and qualitative insights into SME communication needs.

b) Competency Map

A structured framework describing the key areas of communicative competence required by rural tourism SMEs, organised around functional and operational dimensions of language use.

c) Target Task Domains

A set of activity-based groupings that reflect the main areas of professional communication, such as guest interaction, service delivery, problem-solving, and digital communication.

d) Consolidated Task List

A practical list of approximately 25–30 real-life communication tasks that SMEs need to perform in English, which will later be transformed into learning units and scenarios.

e) Input for WP3

Perhaps most importantly, WP2 provides a direct bridge to Work Package 3 by defining:

- what should be taught,
- in which contexts,
- and through which types of tasks.

This ensures that WP3 does not start from abstract assumptions but from a **validated, evidence-based foundation**.

3. Methodological Approach

The Needs Analysis conducted within WP2 followed a **multi-phase, mixed-methods approach**, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. This design ensured both breadth and depth of insight, allowing for a progressive refinement of findings from general patterns to specific, validated communication tasks.

The methodology was implemented across all four partner countries — Serbia, Spain, Romania, and Portugal — ensuring a strong comparative and European dimension.

Table 1: WP2 Needs Analysis Methodology Overview

Phase	Method	Participants	Main Purpose	Key Output
Phase 1	Desk Research	All partners	Open national perspectives on the project topic area	Main subtypes of rural SMEs owners
Phase 2	Survey	~90+ SMEs	Map communication contexts, task frequency, importance/difficulty	Quantitative overview of English use
Phase 3	Expert Interviews	~20 experts	Interpret findings, identify high-risk tasks, validate needs	Qualitative insights + case studies
Phase 4	Focus Groups	Multi-country SMEs	Validate and prioritise tasks	Shortlisted core task list

3.1 Phase 1: Desk research

The desk research into the topic of rural tourism SMEs prepared national insights into the need for ESL training among the target group or SMEs managers.

The partners shortlisted a total of 33 sources, providing the preliminary insight into the topic across the four project countries: Portugal, Romania, Serbia and Spain and also within the wider European context.

The literature sources came from a variety of categories, including:

- European policy reports
- National and regional strategies
- Academic articles
- Academic books
- Professional guides
- Websites and portals
- Applied research and thesis

Unified Typology of Rural Tourism SME Managers / Owners

Based on the combined evidence, rural tourism SME managers across the four countries can be grouped into several **functional learner profiles**, which are largely independent of national context:

1. Rural Accommodation and Homestay Managers
2. Agritourism and Farm-Based Tourism Entrepreneurs
3. Experience, Nature, and Activity-Based Tourism Operators
4. Rural Food, Wine, and Gastronomy Entrepreneurs
5. Digitally-Oriented SME Managers and Marketers
6. Cluster Leaders, Cooperative Managers, and Project Coordinators

Despite differences in national context, the literature identifies several **common learner traits** among rural tourism SME managers:

- **Age-diverse**, but with a significant proportion of learners aged 40–65+
- Strong **instrumental motivation** (English as a business tool)

- Limited time for study; preference for **immediate applicability**
- Higher confidence in professional knowledge than in language skills
- Preference for **experiential, task-based, and contextualised learning**

These shared characteristics strongly support the need for **flexible, modular, and practice-oriented ESL provision**.

3.2 Phase 2: Survey (Quantitative Mapping)

The first phase consisted of a structured survey administered to rural tourism SMEs, with a total of approximately 97 respondents across the four countries.

The survey focused on:

- identifying **types of businesses and roles**,
- mapping **contexts of English use**,
- analysing **frequency of communication tasks**,
- assessing **importance vs difficulty**,
- and collecting **learning preferences**.

This phase provided a **broad statistical overview** of communication practices and revealed consistent patterns across countries, particularly in relation to the central role of English in guest interaction.

Importantly, the survey results highlighted a recurring phenomenon:

while many communication tasks are considered highly important, they are not always performed frequently or confidently in English.

This gap became a key focus of subsequent phases.

3.3 Phase 3: Expert Interviews (Qualitative Deepening)

The second phase involved 19 expert interviews conducted with a range of stakeholders, including:

- SME owners and managers,
- tourism professionals,
- trainers and educators,
- and representatives of associations and development organisations.

The purpose of this phase was to:

- interpret survey findings,
- validate the relevance of identified tasks,
- identify **high-risk communication situations**,
- and explore **emerging needs and future trends**.

A particularly valuable component of this phase was the inclusion of **real-life case studies**, which illustrated how English communication impacts daily operations. These cases frequently involved:

- misunderstandings with guests,
- handling complaints,
- managing unexpected situations,
- and explaining services or products.

The expert interviews confirmed that communication challenges are not only linguistic but also **situational and strategic**, often requiring quick decision-making and interpersonal skills.

3.4 Phase 4: Focus Groups (Validation and Prioritisation)

The final phase consisted of focus group discussions in each partner country, bringing together SME representatives and stakeholders. A total of 49 participants contributed to the focus groups sessions in the four project countries.

Participants were asked to:

- review and refine a list of approximately 30 communication tasks,
- eliminate redundant or overlapping tasks,
- identify missing tasks,
- and prioritise the most important ones.

This process resulted in:

- a **shortlisted set of core tasks**,
- identification of **high-impact communication situations**,
- and evaluation of tasks based on:
 - difficulty,
 - stress level,
 - and training needs.

The focus groups played a crucial role in ensuring that the final outputs of WP2 are:

- **realistic**,
- **relevant**,
- and **directly applicable** to SME practice.

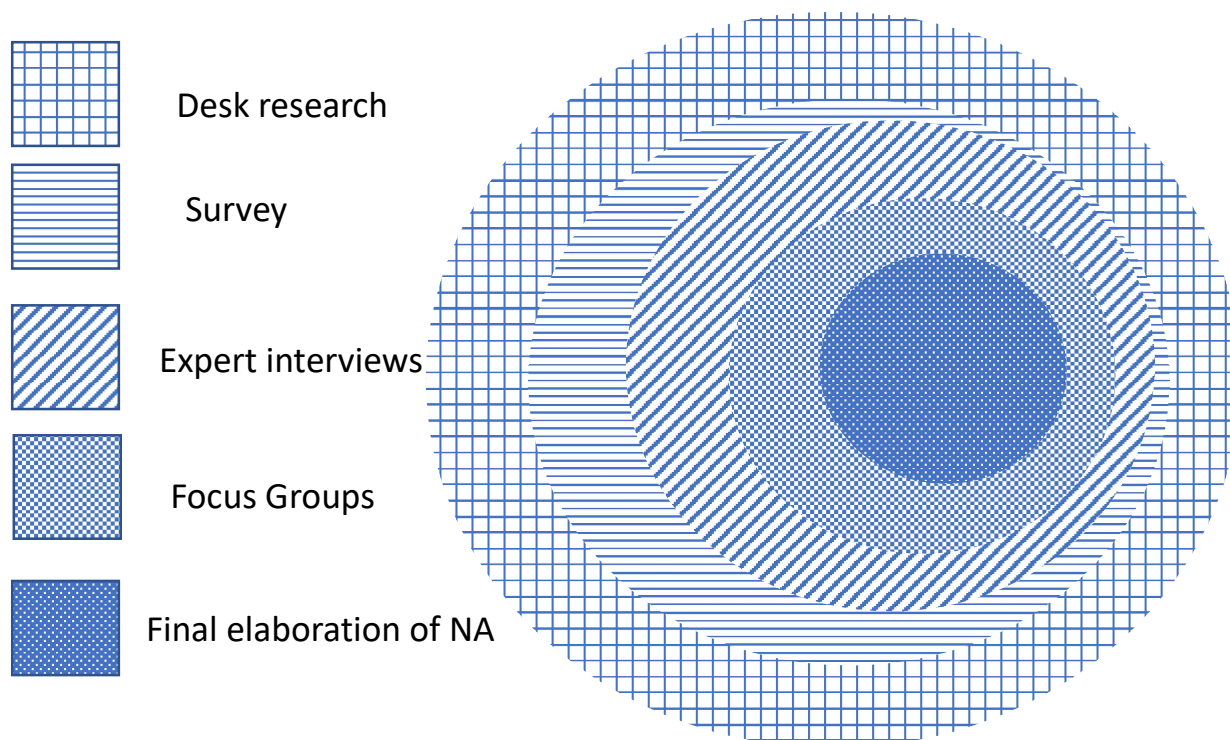
3.5 Methodological Progression

Taken together, the three phases represent a clear analytical progression:

- The desk research identified sub-types of the target group across different national contexts
- The **survey** provided a broad overview of communication contexts and patterns
- The **expert interviews** added depth, interpretation, and real-life examples
- The **focus groups** validated and prioritised tasks from a practitioner perspective

This layered approach ensured that the final outputs are not based on assumptions, but on **triangulated evidence**, combining data from multiple sources and perspectives.

Figure: Stages of the Needs Analysis process



The implementation of WP2 successfully met the planned quantitative indicators:

- Total survey respondents: 97 (across 4 countries)
- Total expert interviews conducted: 19
- Total focus group participants: 49
- Number of countries involved: 4

This confirms full achievement of the planned data collection scope. Instead of the initially planned 80-120 participants in the combined Needs Analysis activities, the total number is almost the double that figure, amounting to 169.

4. Summary of Needs Analysis Findings

The combined findings from the three research phases reveal a highly coherent and consistent picture of English communication needs among rural tourism SMEs across Europe.

The Needs Analysis also reflects broader European priorities, particularly in relation to digital and green transition. Communication tasks increasingly involve digital platforms, online reputation management, and messaging tools. In addition, SMEs are required to communicate aspects of sustainability, responsible tourism, and environmental awareness to international visitors. These elements will be integrated into the course design in WP3.

4.1 English as an Operational Communication Tool

Across all countries, English is primarily used as a tool for **operational communication**, rather than strategic planning. It is most commonly employed in direct interaction with guests, particularly during:

- arrival and check-in,
- the stay itself,
- and participation in activities or experiences.

Pre-arrival communication, typically through emails or booking platforms, also represents a key context. However, English is less frequently used in areas such as:

- marketing and promotion,
- cooperation with partners,
- and broader business development activities.

This suggests that SMEs tend to use English reactively (to respond to guests) rather than proactively (to expand markets).

4.2 The “Guest Journey” Communication Model

A consistent pattern emerging from the data is the alignment of communication tasks with the **guest journey**:

- **Pre-arrival phase:** enquiries, bookings, confirmations
- **Arrival phase:** welcoming guests, giving instructions
- **Stay phase:** answering questions, providing recommendations
- **Experience phase:** guiding, explaining, interacting
- **Post-stay phase:** follow-up communication, reviews

This structure provides a natural framework for organising both communication tasks and future learning modules.

4.3 Importance vs Difficulty Gap

One of the most significant findings across all countries is the gap between:

- the **importance** of communication tasks, and
- the **difficulty** of performing them in English.



While most tasks are rated as highly important, especially those related to guest interaction, many are also perceived as difficult – particularly:

- handling complaints,
- managing misunderstandings,
- explaining complex services,
- and dealing with unexpected situations.

This gap indicates that SMEs are often able to perform basic communication tasks, but struggle in situations that require:

- flexibility,
- precision,
- and spontaneous response.

Table: IMPORTANCE vs DIFFICULTY

	Low Difficulty	High Difficulty
High Importance	Routine tasks	Critical training area
Low Importance	Minor tasks	Strategic tasks

4.4 High-Risk Communication Situations

The analysis identifies several categories of **high-risk communication**, where insufficient English competence can have significant negative consequences:

- **Problem-solving and complaints**, which may affect customer satisfaction and reviews
- **Financial communication**, including prices, payments, and conditions
- **Safety-related communication**, especially in activity-based tourism
- **Reputation management**, including online reviews and feedback

Table: HIGH-RISK COMMUNICATION TABLE

Risk Area	Example	Impact
Complaints	Dissatisfied guest	Reputation
Financial	Prices/payments	Trust
Safety	Instructions	Liability
Reviews	Online feedback	Visibility

These situations are characterised by:

- higher levels of stress,
- real-time interaction,
- and the need for clarity and accuracy.

4.5 Avoidance Behaviour and Missed Opportunities

Both survey and expert interview data indicate that SMEs sometimes **avoid certain communication situations** due to lack of confidence in English. These include:

- engaging in international marketing,
- entering partnerships with foreign stakeholders,
- and responding to complex or negative reviews.

This avoidance behaviour limits business growth and reduces competitiveness, particularly in international markets.

4.6 Demand for Practical, Task-Based Learning

Across all countries, there is a strong and consistent preference for:

- practical, scenario-based learning,
- short and flexible training formats,
- and immediately applicable language tools.

Participants emphasised the need for:

- ready-to-use phrases,
- templates for communication,
- and realistic simulations of work situations.

This clearly supports the adoption of a **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach**, which focuses on performing real-world tasks rather than learning abstract language structures.

Table 2: Summary of Key Findings

Area	Main Finding
Communication context	English is primarily used in direct guest interaction
Task structure	Communication follows the “guest journey” model
Importance vs difficulty	Many tasks are important but difficult to perform
High-risk areas	Complaints, safety, financial communication, reviews
Behavioural pattern	SMEs avoid complex communication situations
Learning preference	Strong preference for practical, task-based learning

Improved English communication in these task areas is expected to directly contribute to enhanced customer satisfaction, stronger online reputation, and increased business opportunities for rural tourism SMEs.

5. Competency Map for Rural Tourism SMEs

Based on the combined findings of the survey, expert interviews, and focus group discussions, a structured **Competency Map** has been developed to define the key areas of English-language communication required by rural tourism SME owners, managers, and staff.

Rather than focusing on abstract language proficiency levels, this Competency Map reflects **functional, task-oriented competences**, directly linked to real-life professional situations. It therefore provides a practical framework for both curriculum design and learning outcomes in WP3.

The analysis identifies **seven core competency areas**, each representing a cluster of related communicative abilities. In other words, each of the identified core competency areas includes several more specific competencies and communicative functions.

These reflect different communication tasks and situations in real work contexts, and when considered at this detailed level, the framework corresponds to approximately 10–15 competency elements as originally envisaged in the project design.

5.1 Operational Communication Competence

This competency area covers routine communication tasks related to the daily functioning of the business.

It includes the ability to:

- welcome guests and introduce services,
- explain accommodation features and facilities,
- provide basic instructions (check-in, schedules, rules),
- and handle standard enquiries.

This competence is typically the most developed among SMEs, as it reflects frequently repeated communication patterns. However, even within this area, clarity and consistency remain important challenges.

5.2 Interaction and Customer Experience Competence

This area relates to the ability to engage with guests in a way that enhances their overall experience.

It includes:

- answering questions in real time,
- maintaining conversational interaction,
- managing expectations,
- and building rapport with visitors.

Unlike purely operational communication, this competence requires a higher degree of flexibility, spontaneity, and interpersonal awareness.

5.3 Problem-Solving and Conflict Management Competence

This is one of the most critical and demanding areas of communication.

It involves:

- responding to complaints,
- clarifying misunderstandings,
- managing difficult or dissatisfied customers,
- and resolving unexpected situations.

The Needs Analysis shows that this area is both **high-risk and high-stress**, and therefore a key priority for training.

5.4 Experience Delivery and Storytelling Competence

A distinctive feature of rural tourism is the emphasis on **authentic experiences**, which require effective communication.

This competency includes:

- presenting local culture, traditions, and heritage,
- describing landscapes, activities, and experiences,
- explaining production processes (e.g. food, wine, crafts),
- and conveying the unique value of the local offer.

This competence is directly linked to **customer satisfaction and upselling opportunities**, yet is often underdeveloped due to linguistic limitations.

5.5 Safety and Responsibility Communication Competence

This area is particularly relevant for experience-based and activity-oriented tourism. It includes:

- giving clear safety instructions,
- explaining rules and procedures,
- managing group behaviour,
- and responding to emergency situations.

Communication in this domain must be:

- precise,
- unambiguous,
- and delivered under time pressure.

5.6 Digital Communication and Reputation Management Competence

As digital platforms become central to tourism, SMEs increasingly need to communicate in English online.

This includes:

- writing emails and messages,
- managing booking platforms,

- responding to online reviews,
- and communicating via social media.

This competence combines language skills with digital literacy and is essential for maintaining visibility and reputation.

5.7 Business and Networking Communication Competence

Finally, this area relates to broader business development and cooperation. It includes:

- presenting the business to partners or clients,
- communicating with tour operators and agencies,
- participating in meetings or projects,
- and negotiating basic terms.

Although less frequently used, this competence is crucial for **long-term growth and internationalisation**. These competences also support sales and marketing functions, particularly in presenting offers, engaging international audiences, and promoting services online.

5.8 Summary of Competency Map

Taken together, these seven competency areas reflect a shift from: general language knowledge → to **functional communication ability in context**
They provide a structured foundation for:

- defining learning outcomes,
- organising course modules,
- and aligning training content with real-world needs.

Table 3: Competency Areas and Description

Competency Area	Description
Operational Communication	Routine service-related communication
Customer Interaction	Real-time interaction and guest engagement
Problem-Solving	Handling complaints and unexpected situations
Experience & Storytelling	Presenting culture, products, and experiences
Safety Communication	Giving instructions and managing risk
Digital Communication	Emails, platforms, reviews, messaging
Business Communication	Networking, partnerships, and cooperation

6. Target Task Domains (Activity Groups)

Building on the Competency Map, the identified communication needs have been further organised into **Target Task Domains**, also referred to as activity groups. These domains represent clusters of related tasks that correspond to key areas of professional activity in rural tourism SMEs.

The domains provide a practical structure for course design in WP3, allowing learning content to be organised into coherent, task-based modules.

6.1 Domain 1: Guest Reception and Orientation

This domain includes all tasks related to welcoming and orienting guests upon arrival.

Typical tasks involve:

- greeting visitors,
- introducing accommodation or services,
- providing initial information,
- and explaining basic procedures.

This domain represents the **first point of contact** and has a strong impact on first impressions.

6.2 Domain 2: Reservations and Pre-Arrival Communication

This domain covers communication before the guest arrives.

It includes:

- responding to enquiries,
- confirming bookings,
- explaining conditions,
- and providing directions or arrival instructions.

Communication in this domain is primarily written and often takes place through digital platforms.

6.3 Domain 3: Service Delivery and Customer Interaction

This is one of the most extensive domains, covering interaction during the guest's stay.

It includes:

- answering questions,
- providing recommendations,
- explaining services and prices,
- and supporting guest needs.

This domain reflects the **core daily communication activity** of SMEs.

6.4 Domain 4: Problem-Solving and Complaint Handling

This domain includes all tasks related to managing difficulties or conflicts.

Typical situations include:

- handling complaints,
- resolving misunderstandings,
- responding to service issues,
- and managing unexpected events.

This domain is characterised by:

- high emotional pressure,
- need for clarity and empathy,
- and importance for customer satisfaction.

6.5 Domain 5: Experience Delivery and Interpretation

This domain focuses on communication related to tourism experiences.

It includes:

- guiding activities,
- explaining local culture and traditions,
- describing landscapes and heritage,
- and presenting products and experiences.

This domain is key for **value creation and differentiation** in rural tourism.

6.6 Domain 6: Safety and Emergency Communication

This domain includes communication related to safety and risk management.

It involves:

- giving safety instructions,
- managing groups,
- and responding to emergency situations.

Accuracy and clarity are essential in this domain.

6.7 Domain 7: Digital Communication and Reputation Management

This domain reflects the growing importance of online interaction.

It includes:

- writing emails and messages,
- managing booking platforms,
- responding to reviews,
- and communicating via social media.

This domain is directly linked to **visibility and competitiveness**.



6.8 Domain 8: Networking and Business Development

This domain covers communication beyond direct guest interaction.

It includes:

- communicating with partners and agencies,
- presenting the business,
- and participating in collaborative activities.

Although less frequent, this domain is crucial for **expansion and cooperation**.

6.9 Role of Task Domains in WP3

The Target Task Domains serve as the **structural backbone** for the development of the training programme in WP3. Each domain can be translated into:

- course modules,
- learning units,
- and sets of tasks or scenarios.

This ensures that the course is:

- logically organised,
- directly relevant to professional practice,
- and adaptable to different learner profiles.

Table 4: Target Task Domains Overview

Domain	Description
Guest Reception	Welcoming and orienting guests
Reservations	Pre-arrival communication and booking
Service Delivery	Interaction during stay
Problem-Solving	Handling complaints and issues
Experience Delivery	Presenting activities and culture



Safety	Instructions and emergency handling
Digital Communication	Online interaction and reviews
Business Development	Partnerships and networking

While competency areas define what learners need to be able to do, task domains group these competences into operational activity areas, which are then translated into course modules in WP3.

7. Consolidated Target Task List

Based on the combined findings of the survey, expert interviews, and focus group discussions, a consolidated list of approximately 30 target communication tasks has been developed. These tasks represent the most relevant, frequent, and impactful communicative activities performed by rural tourism SME owners, managers, and staff when interacting with international guests and partners.

The tasks are grouped according to the previously defined **Target Task Domains**, ensuring a clear link between real-world professional activity and future course design.

In line with the TBLT approach, the focus is placed on communicative tasks rather than abstract skills, ensuring that learning outcomes are directly linked to real-life actions.

7.1 Guest Reception and Orientation

- Welcoming guests and introducing the accommodation or service
- Providing basic information about facilities (Wi-Fi, meals, parking, etc.)
- Explaining check-in/check-out procedures
- Giving directions and orientation within the property

7.2 Reservations and Pre-Arrival Communication

- Responding to booking enquiries (email, platform messages)
- Confirming reservations and explaining conditions
- Providing arrival instructions and directions
- Explaining cancellation policies and payment conditions

7.3 Service Delivery and Customer Interaction

- Answering questions about services, prices, and packages
- Providing recommendations (activities, restaurants, attractions)
- Explaining daily routines, schedules, and availability
- Supporting guest requests and special needs

7.4 Problem-Solving and Complaint Handling

- Responding to complaints and service issues
- Clarifying misunderstandings with guests
- Managing unexpected situations (delays, errors, changes)
- Apologising and offering solutions

7.5 Experience Delivery and Storytelling

- Presenting local traditions, culture, and customs
- Describing natural landscapes and heritage
- Explaining tourism activities and experiences
- Presenting local products (food, wine, crafts, agriculture)

7.6 Safety and Emergency Communication

- Giving safety instructions before activities
- Explaining rules and procedures
- Managing group behaviour during activities

- Responding to emergency or unexpected situations

7.7 Digital Communication and Reputation Management

- Writing emails or messages to guests
- Communicating via booking platforms and social media
- Responding to online reviews (positive and negative)
- Providing follow-up communication after the stay

7.8 Networking and Business Development

- Presenting the business or destination to potential visitors
- Communicating with tour operators, partners, and agencies
- Participating in meetings or collaborative initiatives
- Negotiating basic terms and agreements

7.9 Role of the Task List

This consolidated task list represents the **operational core of WP2 outputs**. It translates the broader competency framework into concrete, teachable units of communication.

Each task:

- reflects a real-life professional situation,
- can be transformed into a **learning scenario**,
- and serves as a building block for **TBLT-based course design** in WP3.

Importantly, the tasks are not isolated language exercises but **complete communicative actions**, requiring learners to combine language, context awareness, and problem-solving skills.

Table 5: Task Characteristics

Task Type	Frequency	Difficulty	Impact
Routine tasks (welcome, info)	High	Low–Medium	Medium
Interaction tasks	High	Medium	High
Problem-solving tasks	Medium	High	Very High
Safety tasks	Low–Medium	High	Critical
Digital tasks	Medium	Medium	High

The final set of task domains and communication tasks was validated through focus group discussions across all partner countries, ensuring its relevance and applicability in real SME contexts.

8. Training Needs and Learner Profile

The Needs Analysis conducted in WP2 provides a clear and consistent picture of the **target learners**, their working conditions, and their expectations regarding English language training. This section summarises the main characteristics of the learner profile, as well as the key training needs identified across all four partner countries.

8.1 Learner Profile

The typical learner within the *English for Tourism SMEs* project can be described as:

- an **owner, manager, or employee** of a rural tourism SME,
- directly involved in **day-to-day operations**,
- frequently responsible for **multiple roles** within the business,
- and often lacking formal training in English for professional purposes.

In most cases, communication in English is not handled by specialised staff, but by the same individuals who:

- manage bookings,
- interact with guests,
- organise activities,
- and handle operational issues.

This multi-functional role creates a need for **broad but practical communicative competence**, rather than specialised or academic language knowledge.

8.2 Key Training Needs

The analysis reveals several recurring training needs that are consistent across countries and types of SMEs.

a) Focus on Real-Life Communication

Learners express a strong need for training that reflects **real professional situations**, rather than abstract grammar or general language exercises.

They need to be able to:

- perform specific tasks,
- respond to real situations,
- and communicate effectively under practical conditions.

b) Managing Complex and High-Stress Situations

While basic communication is often manageable, learners report difficulties in situations that require:

- problem-solving,
- conflict management,
- or rapid response.

These include:

- handling complaints,
- resolving misunderstandings,
- responding to unexpected events,
- and communicating under pressure.

Such situations are perceived as both **difficult and stressful**, and therefore represent a priority area for training.

c) Improving Spoken Interaction

Across all countries, **speaking and listening skills** are identified as the most important areas for improvement. This reflects the importance of:

- face-to-face communication with guests,
- real-time interaction during activities,
- and spontaneous conversation.

Learners need greater confidence in:

- expressing themselves clearly,
- understanding different accents,
- and maintaining communication even with limited vocabulary.

d) Developing Practical Writing Skills

Although spoken interaction is central, written communication also plays a significant role, especially in:

- emails,
- booking platforms,
- and online messaging.

Learners need support in:

- structuring messages clearly,
- using appropriate tone and politeness,
- and avoiding misunderstandings in written communication.

e) Using Ready-to-Apply Language Tools

Participants consistently highlight the value of:

- ready-made phrases,
- templates for emails and responses,
- and structured communication models.

These tools help reduce uncertainty and increase confidence, particularly in unfamiliar or complex situations.

8.3 Preferred Learning Formats

The survey results show a clear preference for **flexible and accessible learning formats**, adapted to the working conditions of SMEs.

Most preferred formats include:

- **short, self-paced online units,**
- **blended learning** (combining online and face-to-face sessions),
- and **mobile-friendly learning content.**

This reflects the limited time availability of SME staff and their need for **efficient, modular learning.**

8.4 Preferred Types of Learning Materials

Learners show a strong preference for:

- **real-life scenarios and tasks,**
- **short instructional videos,**
- **interactive exercises,**
- and **example templates** (emails, dialogues, responses).

Less interest is shown in:

- purely theoretical explanations,
- or long text-based materials without practical application.

This reinforces the need for a **practice-oriented, task-based approach.**

8.5 Implications for Training Design

Taken together, the findings indicate that effective training for this target group should:

- focus on **practical communication tasks,**
- simulate **real-life situations,**
- support learners in **high-risk and high-stress scenarios,**
- provide **clear and reusable language tools,**
- and be delivered in **flexible, modular formats.**

These conclusions directly inform the design principles of WP3 and confirm the suitability of a **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach.**

Table 6: Learner Profile and Needs

Aspect	Description
Role	Owner /manager or multi-role staff
Work context	Direct customer interaction
Time availability	Limited
Main need	Practical communication skills
Preferred format	Short, flexible learning units
Preferred content	Real-life tasks and scenarios

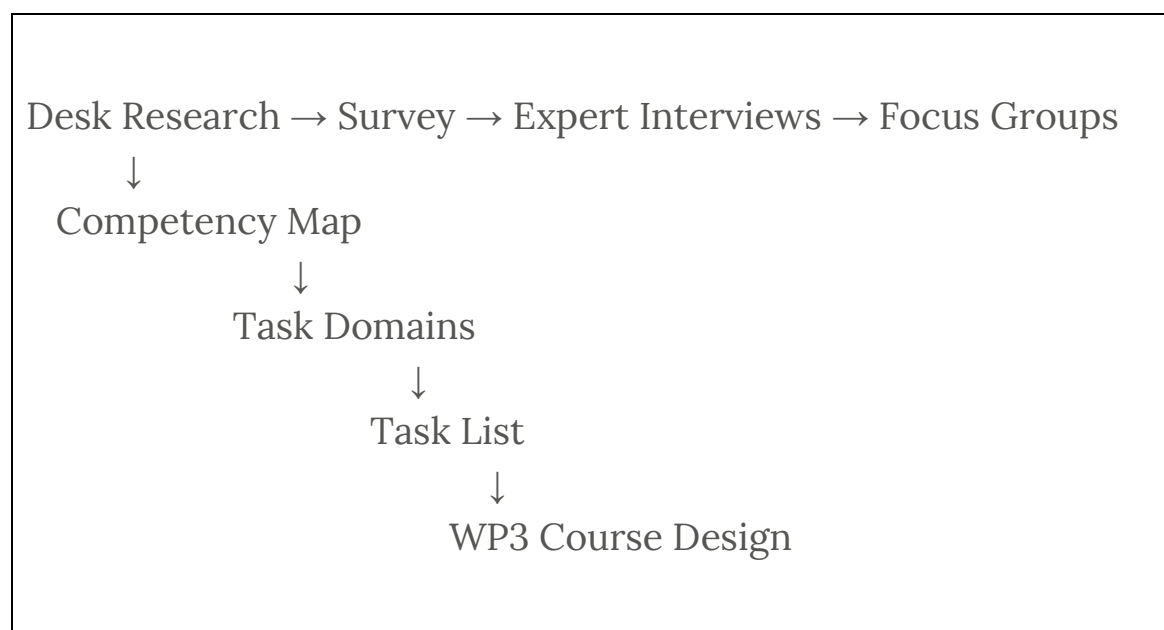
The target group includes learners with varying levels of English proficiency, often at beginner to intermediate levels (A1–B2). Many participants have limited formal training in English, which highlights the need for accessible, inclusive, and practice-oriented learning solutions.

9. Alignment with WP3 – Course and Resource Development

The outputs of Work Package 2 provide a fully validated and structured foundation for the implementation of Work Package 3, which focuses on the development of the English language course and accompanying resource bank.

The Needs Analysis has ensured that WP3 will not be based on general assumptions about language learning, but on a **clear, evidence-based understanding of real communication needs** in rural tourism SMEs. This alignment is essential for ensuring that the final training programme is relevant, practical, and directly applicable in professional contexts.

Figure: Needs Analysis → Course Development Flow





9.1 From Needs Analysis to Course Design

The transition from WP2 to WP3 can be understood as a progression from:

- identifying **what learners need to do**, to
- designing **how they will learn to do it**.

The key WP2 outputs support this transition in the following ways:

- The **Competency Map** defines the core areas of communicative competence that the course must address.
- The **Target Task Domains** provide a logical structure for organising course modules.
- The **Consolidated Task List** identifies the specific communicative actions that will form the basis of learning activities.

Together, these elements ensure that the course design in WP3 can be directly aligned with **real-world professional tasks**, rather than abstract language objectives.

Table 7: Transition from Needs Analysis to Course Design

WP2 Output	Role in WP3
Competency Map	Defines learning objectives
Task Domains	Defines course structure
Task List	Defines learning activities
Learner Profile	Defines delivery format
Training Needs	Defines content priorities

9.2 Pedagogical Approach: Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

The findings of WP2 strongly support the adoption of a **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)** approach.

This approach is particularly suitable because:

- learners need to perform **real-life tasks**, not just learn language rules,
- communication often takes place in **specific, goal-oriented situations**,
- and effectiveness depends on the ability to **complete tasks successfully**, even with limited language resources.

Within WP3, this means that learning units should be built around:

- realistic scenarios,
- clearly defined communicative goals,
- and tasks that mirror actual workplace situations.

9.3 Proposed Course Structure

Based on the Target Task Domains, the future course can be structured into **modular units**, each corresponding to a specific area of professional activity.

A possible structure includes:

- Module 1: Guest Reception and Orientation
- Module 2: Reservations and Pre-Arrival Communication
- Module 3: Service Delivery and Customer Interaction
- Module 4: Problem-Solving and Complaint Handling
- Module 5: Experience Delivery and Storytelling
- Module 6: Safety and Emergency Communication
- Module 7: Digital Communication and Reputation Management
- Module 8: Networking and Business Development

Each module can be further divided into **short learning units**, focusing on individual tasks.

9.4 Learning Content and Materials

The Needs Analysis clearly indicates that learners benefit most from **practical, application-oriented materials**. Therefore, WP3 should prioritise the development of:

- **scenario-based dialogues and role-plays,**
- **case studies based on real SME situations,**
- **communication templates** (emails, messages, responses),
- **interactive exercises and simulations,**
- and **short video-based demonstrations** of communication tasks.

Where possible, materials should reflect authentic contexts from rural tourism environments, ensuring relevance and engagement.

9.5 Focus on High-Impact Communication

WP2 findings suggest that not all communication tasks carry equal importance. Therefore, WP3 should give particular attention to:

- **high-risk situations**, such as complaints and emergencies,
- **high-value communication**, such as presenting products and experiences,
- and **high-frequency interactions**, such as welcoming guests and answering questions.

This prioritisation will ensure that training has a **direct and measurable impact** on business performance.

9.6 Flexibility and Accessibility

Given the profile of the target learners, WP3 should ensure that the course is:

- **modular and flexible**, allowing learners to focus on relevant topics,
- **time-efficient**, with short learning units,
- **accessible on multiple devices**, especially mobile platforms,
- and suitable for **self-paced or blended learning formats**.

This is essential for ensuring participation and sustained engagement.

9.7 Resource Bank Development

In addition to the structured course, WP3 will also develop a **Resource Bank**, which should include:

- downloadable templates and guides,
- vocabulary lists organised by task/domain,
- examples of real-life communication,
- and supplementary practice materials.

The Resource Bank should function as a **practical toolkit**, allowing SMEs to access and apply language support directly in their daily work.

9.8 Ensuring Continuity Between WP2 and WP3

The success of WP3 depends on maintaining a strong link with WP2 outputs. This requires:

- consistent use of the **task-based framework**,
- alignment between **identified needs and developed content**,
- and continuous reference to **real SME communication contexts**.

By building directly on the validated findings of WP2, WP3 can ensure that the final course is:

- relevant,

- practical,
- and effective in supporting rural tourism SMEs.

WP2 provides the direct foundation for WP3, ensuring that all course content, learning scenarios, and resources are derived from validated communication needs and real-world SME practices.

10. Conclusion

Work Package 2 has provided a comprehensive and empirically grounded analysis of the English communication needs of rural tourism SMEs across Serbia, Spain, Romania, and Portugal. Through a structured, multi-phase methodology combining surveys, expert interviews, and focus group discussions, the project has successfully moved from a broad understanding of communication practices to a clearly defined set of target tasks and competencies.

The findings consistently demonstrate that English plays a critical role in the daily operations of rural tourism businesses, particularly in direct interaction with international visitors. At the same time, the analysis highlights a significant gap between the importance of communication tasks and the ability of SMEs to perform them confidently and effectively in English. This gap is most evident in complex, high-pressure situations such as problem-solving, complaint handling, and managing unexpected events.

The Competency Map and Target Task Domains developed within WP2 provide a structured and practical framework for addressing these needs. By focusing on real-life communicative actions rather than abstract language knowledge, the project establishes a strong foundation for a task-based approach to language learning. The Consolidated Task List further translates this framework into concrete, teachable units that reflect the realities of professional practice.

Importantly, WP2 also identifies clear preferences and expectations among learners, emphasising the need for flexible, modular, and highly practical training solutions. This reinforces the relevance of the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach and provides direct guidance for the design of learning materials and delivery formats in WP3.

As the project moves into the next phase, the outputs of WP2 ensure that course development will be firmly rooted in validated needs and real-world contexts. The transition to WP3 therefore represents not a shift in direction, but a continuation of a coherent process – from analysis to implementation – aimed at enhancing the communicative competence and competitiveness of rural tourism SMEs across Europe.